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UNCLAS MANAMA 000227

SIPDIS

NEA/PI AROMANOWSKI; IIP/G/NEA RWINCHESTER; NEA/PPD MQUINN
AND CWHITTLESEY; NEA/ARP DBERNS; R

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: INFORMATION MINISTER SEEKS U.S. ASSISTANCE

REF: 2/16/05 MONROE/ROMANOWSKI TELCON

1. This is an action cable. Please see paragraph 4.

2. Newly appointed Minister of Information and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mohammed Abdul Ghaffar, requested USG assistance to professionalize Bahrain Satellite Television during a February 10 meeting with the Ambassador. Dr. Abdul Ghaffar asked us to identify an American media organization or consultants who would serve as in-house advisors on management, programming, technology, and set design at the Bahrain Satellite Television Channel, the Kingdom's only government-owned and operated satellite television outlet. The Minister emphasized the importance of improving television news services in the Arab world.

3. The Ambassador briefed the Minister on MEPI-funded media training programs which are currently active in Bahrain. The Minister requested additional support from MEPI in improving Bahrain Satellite Television.

4. ACTION REQUEST: Post requests information on media organizations and/or implementers that could advise the Ministry of Information on management, programming, technology, and set design at the Bahrain Satellite Television Channel. The Minister would like the implementer to provide a comprehensive plan on the steps needed to improve Bahrain Television, and the timeframe expected to complete the project. They are looking for an experienced implementer that could walk them through all of the necessary steps, beginning with a baseline assessment. The implementer would be expected to develop a detailed plan on how to improve the quality of broadcasting, including staffing, training and equipment recommendations.

5. Per reftelcon, an early March visit by NEA/PI Romanowski would provide an excellent opportunity to explore how best to move forward.

Monroe